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EXCERPT

White House Watch

The Reign in Plains

Plains

John Osborne

The President's signing of a strip mining control bill that he considered inadequate, and his submission to Congress of a proposal for less consolidation of authority over the major intelligence agencies in his new Director of Central Intelligence, Admiral Stansfield Turner, than Turner had demanded and Carter had intended, indicated that he, contrary to the reputation he earned when he was Governor of Georgia, can settle for less than he wants or has promised when he must. Arnold Donohue, a veteran civil servant in the national security section of the Office of Management and Budget, whom the President presumably has never heard of, devised the compromise formula that Turner and Defense Secretary Harold Brown, who was fighting to retain command of the National Security Agency and other military intelligence agencies, accepted from Carter without pleasure but with necessary public acquiescence. If Congress agrees—it's all dependent on Congress—Turner gets control of military and civilian agencies' budgets and long-range policy planning and the Defense Secretary gets operational authority to make the military agencies do what the Intelligence Director wants them to do. That seems mushy and confusing because it is mushy and confusing. In the course of announcing and considerably exaggerating the substance of the intelligence reorganization, Carter said that he had "strengthened" the Intelligence Oversight Board, a useful entity that President Ford created. The IOB still has a staff of one professional person and has been "strengthened" only in the doubtful sense that three acceptable Carter appointees have replaced three acceptable Ford appointees.